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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ROME 004989

SIPDIS

USDA/FAS/MACKE/JONES/SLUTSKY;
USDA FOR DAVID HEGWOOD;
STATE PASS USTR FOR SLOAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/10/2007

TAGS: [ETRD](#) [EAGR](#) [TBIO](#) [EAGR](#) [TBIO](#) [IT](#) [EUN](#) [ITETRD](#) [EUN](#)

SUBJECT: PRESSING ITALIAN POLICYMAKERS ON EU BIOTECH ISSUES

REF: A. A) BRUSSELS 4869

[B. B\) BRUSSELS 4538](#)

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[C. C\) STATE 176834](#)

[D. D\) BRUSSELS 3764](#)

CLASSIFIED BY: ECMIN SCOTT KILNER, FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

[11.](#) (C) SUMMARY: IN DEMARCHES ON SENIOR GOI OFFICIALS OCTOBER 8-10, DCM, ECMIN, AGMIN AND SCIENCE COUNSELOR PRESSED THE U.S. POSITION ON EU TRACEABILITY AND LABELING (T/L) AND FOOD AND FEED (F/F) PROPOSALS. EMPHASIZING THAT THE UPCOMING AGRICULTURE MINISTERS COUNCIL AND ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS COUNCIL WOULD BE OF KEY IMPORTANCE, THEY ASKED THAT ITALY TAKE MORE REASONABLE, SCIENCE-BASED POSITIONS (REF A) IN BOTH MEETINGS. DESPITE UNDERSTANDING FOR OUR POSITION IN SEVERAL PARTS OF THE GOVERNMENT, GOI BIOTECH POLICY CONTINUES TO BE DRIVEN BY THE OBSTRUCTIONIST MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE. END SUMMARY.

VICE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN TRADE URSO

[12.](#) (C) ECMIN MET OCTOBER 8 WITH DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN TRADE ADOLFO URSO. HE TOLD URSO THAT, ALTHOUGH PRIME MINISTER BERLUSCONI AND OTHER GOI OFFICIALS HAD SPOKEN IN FAVOR OF BIOTECHNOLOGY, WE WERE DISAPPOINTED THAT AGRICULTURE MINISTER ALEMANNINO CONTINUED HIS ANTI-BIOTECH CAMPAIGN UNCHECKED. ECMIN POINTED TO RECENT GOI/USG COOPERATION ON THE WHEAT MARGIN OF PREFERENCE ISSUE AS AN EXAMPLE OF HOW THE U.S. AND ITALY COULD WORK TOGETHER EVEN ON AGRICULTURE ISSUES. WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE SIMILAR DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION ON BIOTECHNOLOGY.

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[13.](#) (C) A MORE COHERENT, FLEXIBLE GOI POSITION WOULD BE VERY IMPORTANT FOR THE EU AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL MEETINGS OCTOBER 15-17. STRESSING THAT THE U.S. HAD WORKED TO NARROW OUR REQUESTS FOR CHANGES IN THE T/L AND F/F PROPOSALS TO A FEW CRUCIAL POINTS, ECMIN ASKED THAT URSO RAISE OUR CONCERNS WITH HIS COLLEAGUES.

4.(C) URSO NOTED THAT MANY IN THE GOI, INCLUDING THE PRIME MINISTER, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER -- AND URSO HIMSELF -- WERE QUITE OPEN ON BIOTECHNOLOGY. HOWEVER, THE MINISTERS MOST INVOLVED IN SETTING BIOTECH POLICY WERE AGRICULTURE MINISTER ALEMANNINO AND ENVIRONMENT MINISTER MATTEOLI. URSO UNDERSTOOD THE U.S. POINTS, AND UNDERTOOK TO DISCUSS THEM WITH MINISTER ALEMANNINO, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER FINI AND THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE.

[15.](#) (C) URSO ALSO COMMENTED THAT, A FEW WEEKS AGO IN OTTAWA, HE HAD DISCUSSED BIOTECHNOLOGY WITH CANADA'S DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN TRADE. URSO HAD SUGGESTED A TRADE OFF BETWEEN A MORE HELPFUL ATTITUDE TOWARD ITALY'S GEOGRAPHIC INDICATORS PROPOSAL IN RETURN FOR A MORE HELPFUL ITALIAN ATTITUDE ON BIOTECHNOLOGY. OF COURSE, THIS WAS ONLY AN IDEA, NOT YET A PROPOSAL, AND NEEDED A GREAT DEAL OF WORK, BUT IT MIGHT ADVANCE TWO ISSUES OF GREAT IMPORTANCE TO OUR TWO RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES.

[16.](#) (C) IN REPLY, ECMIN SAID THAT WASHINGTON WAS HIGHLY UNLIKELY EVEN TO CONSIDER SUCH AN IDEA SO LONG AS THE AGRICULTURE MINISTER CONTINUED TO CAMPAIGN FIERCELY AND PUBLICLY AGAINST BIOTECHNOLOGY.

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[17.](#) (C) NOTE: URSO IS A LONG-TIME CLOSE ASSOCIATE OF DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER FINI. FINI, URSO AND MATTEOLI REPRESENT THE LEADING FACTION OF THE ALLIANZA NAZIONALE (AN) COALITION PARTNERS. AGRICULTURE MINISTER ALEMANNINO IS A MEMBER OF A SMALLER FACTION WITHIN AN. MFA EU AFFAIRS OFFICIAL MASSIMO GAIANI TOLD US OCTOBER 9 THAT URSO'S STAFF HAD BRIEFED HIM ALREADY ON ECMIN'S MEETING WITH URSO. END NOTE.

AGRICULTURE U/S SCARPA

8.(C) AGMINCOUNSELOR MET WITH MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE UNDER
SECRETARY SCARPA TO DISCUSS REF A DEMARCHE. SCARPA, WHO

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STRONGLY DIFFERS FROM AGRICULTURE MINISTER ALEMANNO ON THE
SUBJECT OF BIOTECHNOLOGY, HAS CLOSE TIES TO BERLUSCONI.
SCARPA WELCOMED U.S. EFFORTS TO CONSTRUCTIVELY ENGAGE THE EU
ON WHERE AND HOW THE T/L AND F/F PROPOSALS COULD BE MADE MORE
PALATABLE FOR THE U.S. HE WAS, HOWEVER, PESSIMISTIC THAT
ALEMANNO COULD BE PERSUADED TO TAKE A MORE FLEXIBLE LINE ON
THE F/F PROPOSAL. SCARPA PROMISED TO SHARE THE U.S. MESSAGE
WITH THE AGRICULTURE MINISTER, BUT INDICATED THAT
BIOTECHNOLOGY WAS BECOMING AN IMPORTANT POLITICAL PLANK FOR
ALEMANNO, LEAVING HIM WITH LESS AND LESS ROOM FOR MANEUVER.

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ACTION EUR-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AGRE-00	AID-00	CEA-01	CIAE-00	COME-00
	CTME-00	DODE-00	SRPP-00	EB-00	EXIM-01	E-00	VC-00
	FRB-00	HHS-01	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	ITC-01	L-00
	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OES-01	OMB-01	OPIC-01
	ACE-00	SP-00	SSO-00	SS-00	STR-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00
	EPAE-00	DRL-02	G-00	SAS-00	/011W		

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P 111626Z OCT 02
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6299
INFO EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMCONSUL NAPLES

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19. (C) SCARPA ALSO PROMISED TO SHARE U.S. VIEWS WITH THE
PRIME MINISTER'S UNDER SECRETARY (AND CLOSE ADVISOR) GIANNI
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LETTA. SCARPA NOTED THAT, IN HIS VIEW, THE ONLY LEVERAGE
POSSIBLE WITH ALEMANNO IS HIS DESIRE TO AVOID CONFRONTATION
WITH THE PRIME MINISTER. HENCE, SCARPA'S EFFORTS TO KEEP
LETTA INFORMED OF DEVELOPMENTS. WE HAVE HEARD SUBSEQUENTLY
FROM SCARPA'S STAFF THAT LETTA HAS BEEN INFORMED OF THE
LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN THE U.S. POSITION.

ENVIRONMENT MINISTRY DG CLINI

110. (C) SCIENCE COUNSELOR MET WITH ENVIRONMENT MINISTER
MATTEOLI'S DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS,
CORRADO CLINI, ON OCTOBER 9 TO DISCUSS REFTTEL POINTS, AS WELL
AS THE MINISTER'S TRIP TO THE U.S. MATTEOLI WILL SIGN AN
AGREEMENT WITH EPA ADMINISTRATOR WHITMAN, PART OF WHICH WILL
INVOLVE SCIENTIFIC COOPERATION ON BIOTECHNOLOGY.

111. (C) CLINI NOTED THAT ENVIRONMENT MINISTRY MATTEOLI WILL
REPRESENT HIS MINISTRY'S VIEWS AT THE OCTOBER 17 COUNCIL OF
ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS, AS THERE WAS NO COORDINATED GOI
POSITION.

PRIME MINISTER'S DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR CASTELLANETA

12.(C) THE DCM MET OCTOBER 10 WITH DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR
CASTELLANETA IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE. EXPLAINING THE
IMPORTANCE OF THE OCTOBER 15-17 MEETINGS IN BRUSSELS, THE DCM
ASKED CASTELLANETA TO HAVE THE MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE AND
ENVIRONMENT WORK CONSTRUCTIVELY IN THEIR RESPECTIVE COUNCILS.

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113. (C) CASTELLANETA TOOK NOTES ON THE U.S. POSITION AND
UNDERTOOK TO COMMUNICATE WITH AG MINISTER ALEMANNO AND
ENVIRONMENT MINISTER MATTEOLI.

COMMENT:

14. (C) WE HAVE, WITHOUT QUESTION, GOTTEN THE GOI'S ATTENTION ON THE UPCOMING BRUSSELS MEETINGS. DESPITE THE EXPRESSIONS OF UNDERSTANDING FROM OUR SEVERAL GOI INTERLOCUTORS, IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER ALEMANNI AND MATTEOLI WILL SOFTEN THEIR STANCES WHILE IN THE ITALIAN CHAIR DURING THEIR RESPECTIVE COUNCIL MEETINGS. IN THE LONGER RUN, ALL SIGNS CONTINUE TO POINT TO THE REALITY THAT A SIGNIFICANT SHIFT IN ITALY'S BIOTECH POLICY WILL REQUIRE THE DIRECT, PERSONAL ENGAGEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER.
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